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BULLETIN OF THE

TAYLOR SOCIETY

AN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY TO PROMOTE THE SCIENCE
AND THE ART OF ADMINISTRATION AND OF MANAGEMENT

The Economic Consequences of Power Production

By Fred Henderson
Norwich, England

Address at the Annual Dinner,
New York, December 8, 1933

[illegible] 1934
DIVISION

Engineering Societies Building
29 W. Thirty-Ninth St.
New York

OCTOBER, 1933 VOL. XVIII, NO. 5

Objects of the Taylor Society Incorporated

The objects of this Society are, through research, discussion, publication and other appropriate means:

1. To secure—for the common benefit of the community, the worker, the manager and the employer—understanding and intelligent direction of the principles of administration and management which govern organized effort for accomplishing industrial and other social purposes.

2. To secure the gradual elimination of unnecessary effort and of unduly burdensome toil in the accomplishment of the work of the world.

3. To promote the scientific study and teaching of the principles governing organized effort, and of the mechanisms of their adaptations and application under varying and changing conditions.

4. To promote general recognition of the fact that the evaluation and application of these principles and mechanisms are the mutual concern of the community, the worker, the manager and the employer.

5. To inspire in labor, manager and employer a constant adherence to the highest ethical conception of their individual and collective responsibility.

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Membership in the Taylor Society may be either individual or firm. The following is a statement of membership classes. The fees and dues for members in other countries than the United States are one-half of those specified. The exception is the organized branch which is permitted to remit one-quarter of the regular fees for each of its individual or firm members. Application for membership should be made on a regular form which may be secured from the Society. New members may be elected directly to the grades marked*.

1. **Member*: An individual interested in the development of the science and the art of management as engineer, executive, operative, scientist, investigator or teacher. Minimum age 28. Initiation Fee. $15. Annual dues including subscription to the Bulletin, $15.

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[illegible] **Firm Member*: A firm or organization interested in the advancement of the science and the art of management which desires to make the service of the Society available to members of its organization. A firm member designates two representatives (who may be changed from time to time at the organization's discretion) who have all the rights and privileges of membership except the right to vote and to hold office. Annual dues, including two subscriptions to the Bulletin, $30.

6. **Contributing Member*: Any individual, firm or organization desiring to promote the work of the Society by an annual contribution of $100 or more. A contributing member has all the privileges of personal or firm membership, as the case may be, including one subscription to the Bulletin for each $15 contributed.

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All dues are payable in advance, either annually or in semi-annual instalments. The fiscal year is November 1 to October 31. Members elected other than at the beginning of the fiscal year are charged pro rata (quarterly) for the first year.

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Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting of the Taylor Society was held pursuant to due notice, at the Hotel Pennsylvania, New York, at 11:15 A.M., on Thursday, December 7. The report of the letter ballot election of new officers, reports of retiring officers and an informal discussion of the affairs of the Society by the Managing Director, were followed by general discussion.

The Treasurer's report, distributed at the meeting, showed that a drastic reduction of the budget had resulted in a surplus of $597.28 for the fiscal year ending October 31, 1933.

The new officers elected by the letter ballot were: President and Director, William H. Leffingwell, New York; Vice-President and Director, F. S. Blanchard, New York; Treasurer and Director, E. W. Clark, 3d, Philadelphia; Directors, Ernest G. Brown, Bristol, R. I.; Helen A. Carnes, Seattle; Ordway Tead, New York.

It was voted that the Nominating Committee for the year 1933-34 be appointed by the President. No other motion was offered.

H. S. Person, Secretary

Comment

IT HAS been a great pleasure to have Mr. Fred Henderson as guest and principal speaker at the annual meeting. Those who enjoyed the privilege of hearing him have testified that the content of his message and the simplicity and charm of the author's personality made it an impressive occasion.

IT WILL please our readers to know that neither business nor economics is with Mr. Henderson an exclusive interest. Professionally he should be designated as a consultant on local government. For many years he has been a member of the Council of Norwich, England, and an expert on local government. This activity and particularly his responsibility as a director of one of the largest electric power companies in England have given his economic thinking a solid realistic basis.

THIS matter of the economic consequences of power production is of the first importance. Our thinking about the economic problem should start at that point. We have in the United States and in Western Europe a total plant capable of producing far more goods than has ever been realized. Yet it has been idle; idle in the midst of want, distress and in some instances of starvation. Our troubles cannot be attributed to an inability to produce. The case is clear that the trouble lies in our collective management of this equipment.

That the United States and Western Europe possess an enormous production capacity not yet fully utilized appears to be beyond dispute. It has never been used to full capacity in accordance with prevailing methods of management (except, perhaps, during the war); and its use has been far from the capacity potential in universal utilization of the best methods of management. This fact was indicated by the Hoover Committee's reports on Waste in Industry and on Social Trends. More specifically it was indicated in the article by Robert F. Martin on "Industrial Overcapacity" in the June, 1932, issue of this Bulletin, and by the Alford-Hannum report on "KMH Analysis of Industrial Production" presented to the New York Chapter of the Society of Industrial Engineers. Other reports to the same effect are soon to be published.

The author does not in this address tell us what should be done about the matter. In the course of a conversation during a walk with one of the younger members of our staff he remarked: "My generation's task is to diagnose the trouble; it is the task of your generation to do something about it." In another conversation he expressed the judgment that if a diagnosis is sufficiently complete the line of action, the main objective of action, should stand out clearly. It is a fact that his diagnosis, as set forth in several published books, is sufficiently complete as to indicate the major objective of action. The detailed mechanisms by which this objective is achieved in any particular country would naturally be characteristic of that country's dependency on its framework of government, commercial and industrial organization, and social institutions. However, in its general outlines, the problem appears principally to center about changes in the price system—the loss of flexibility of prices caused by the development of institutions which permit rigidities in various parts of the system. For it is still an accepted economic generalization that production creates purchasing power and purchasing power stimulates and sustains production, continuously and steadily, provided there is sufficient flexibility in the price system to permit, by price adjustments, a clearing of production into consumption. What institutions have destroyed this flexibility?

The Economic Consequences of Power Production

Address at the Annual Dinner of the Taylor Society, New York, December 8, 1933

By **FRED HENDERSON**

Economist, Norwich, England

DURING the two months since I landed in America, I have had the privilege of seeing and studying your life here from many points of view and with some degree of intimacy. Besides visiting many of your great industrial centers I have had the welcome opportunity of spending some weeks in the remoter farming areas of such states as Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and the privilege of much intimate talk with all sorts and conditions of people. I have come into close contact with large general public audiences in many centers as far west as Minneapolis and Omaha and south to St. Louis. I have enjoyed the great privilege of being the guest of several of your leading universities and of quite a number of the larger colleges and advanced schools. But during all that varied tour, I have looked forward with a special and particular pleasure to this meeting with the Taylor Society.

For I may perhaps presume to interpret the invitation with which you have honored me to speak here this evening as denoting some acquaintance with—and if not full approval of, at any rate some real interest in—the work I have been doing in economic research during the past few years. And from that acquaintance you will readily understand why I have rejoiced in the prospect of meeting here those with whom I can speak in the same language, and by the same mental approach as my own, as to the troubles and confusions now besetting the economic life of the world.

By that I do not presume to claim an identity of opinion amongst us in the conclusions we may have reached in regard to those troubles and difficulties, but only that we *do* approach the study of them and with something of a common purpose and a common standard of real values; a common instinct as to what has to be rejected and what accepted; a sense of the basic aims which must be served in the economic procedure of human life, if the affairs of the world are ever to be restored to a true balance. Here in this gathering, if anywhere in America, I could look forward with more than hope—with confident certainty—to meeting those whose instinct for evaluating real things and detecting illusions, is the keystone of their activities. For in all the welter of our economic confusions, you members of the Taylor Society, by virtue of the very purposes for which the Society exists, represent the mind and outlook of those who *make and create.* You are working at the realities; concerned primarily with increasing the mastery of man over the difficulties with which human life has to contend in its unceasing struggle with Nature for survival and enlargement.

To those of us who share that purpose and outlook, finding in it the inspiration and direction of all our activities, the times in which we live are difficult and unhappy. For we cannot but be conscious of an insistent thwarting and obstruction; of the presence in the economy of the world of some power which steadily turns our work aside from its fulfillment in human life. Stripped of all its non-essentials, the present economic confusion is the same thing everywhere. What it amounts to is simply this—that the peoples of the world are being disabled from getting into use and consumption the things they all need, and which they can produce quite readily and plentifully. Our need for them is urgent; our power of producing them is ample; but for some reason we are having to go without them. I was at Chicago a few weeks ago, and one of the most interesting things I saw there was the splendid exhibit put up at the World's Fair by the Agricultural Department of your Federal Government. It was an exhibit setting out what is being done in agricultural research to increase human mastery over the obstructions, the natural deficiences, with which the agriculturist has to contend. There were large-scale models of grasshoppers, locusts, weevils and other insect pests, and the exhibit showed what is being done to study their life habits and to combat their destructiveness. There were sections showing what is being done in the study of soils and in the application of fertilizers to overcome natural infertility and soil exhaustion. And many other things of a like nature, including a wonderful display of appliances for reducing the human drudgery necessary for securing this ever-increasing abundance from the land. Sane, scientific, splendid work: all devoted to giving man a more and more ensured mastery over natural resources and natural difficulties: giving to every square yard of cultivated soil, and to every hour of human time devoted to the service of production, an enlarged output of the world's essential requirements.

And then, you know, after all this splendid effort to make and create, to enlarge supplies, and to liberate human life from drudgery in enlarging them: when you get the increased yield and the greater fruitfulness, you proceed to plough it in, to burn it, to dump it into the sea as if it were a curse instead of a blessing to mankind. And if that is what we produce things for, if that is the end to which our research and our endeavor to make and create is conducted, one wonders whether it would not be a better and more fitting thing to let the locust and the weevil get on with the job in the first instance. They, rather than the maker and creator instinct in mankind, would seem to be the forces co-operating with our economic system. For the means should harmonize with the end: and with the end revealed in these economic happenings, it is our work rather than theirs which is out of tune.

With every such act of destruction, it is not merely the crops that are being ploughed in. It is our research; the quality in human life for which our mentality of making and creating stands: our purpose in life: the whole outlook and spirit which the work of your Society embodies: you yourselves and all that you signify in human motives and activities, which is being ploughed under and destroyed, thwarted in its achievement, despised and rejected of men. It would almost seem, that what you and your spiritual kindred—the men everywhere who seek and strive to make and create—are doing is to offer power and mastery in the struggle with Nature to a world which for some reason is disabled from making any intelligent use of it.

And yet we know, with that ineradicable confidence in the ultimate sanity of things which is instinctive in the maker and creator, that *our* purpose is the *true* purpose; and that, as against all this disablement, all this destructive tendency in the existing economic procedure, it is our outlook and spirit which has the promise and the potency of man's future in it. There is in all this economic confusion—which, I repeat, is basically nothing other than the disablement of the world from using and enjoying our essential contribution to life—some profound reversal of the sane purposes to which life and its activities should be directed.

Clearly the end to which the existing economic procedure is directed is not ours. It is in irreconcilable conflict with our aim, which is creative; the assertion of the human spirit in an ever increasing mastery over the secrets of life; the subjugation of nature to human requirements, so that mankind may have life and have it more abundantly.

These current economics, in the results that come of them, are in the same category as the natural obstructions and calamities we are seeking to overcome. They thwart and destroy. They are the allies of the pests, the floods, the infertilities and insufficiencies in nature, which our particular service to mankind strives incessantly to render impotent against human life. They seek to increase human drudgery. We seek essentially to reduce it—to offer to mankind a life of cultural activity released from drudgery and endowed with abundance. If our work does not mean *that*, it means nothing. And it is surely our business—in the direct line of the imperative which life puts upon men of our temperament and outlook—that we study and examine them as we would study and examine any other pest or calamity or refractoriness in nature, with a view to mastering them and rendering them impotent against human life.

We, at any rate, if we have any pretense at all to pursue the scientific method in our study, can put aside at the outset the device of the average politician in attributing these evils to the mere malevolence of particular men or classes of men; the perversity of the rival political party. What we are dealing with is a procedure in economics which is deeply rooted in the social structure of the world, outside of whose framework of established procedure neither the classes that suffer nor the classes that profit by our economic confusions can possibly take the conduct of their individual lives and businesses. No man can make a change in social structure, or in the procedure which that structure necessitates, as a private change in his own affairs. The thing goes very much deeper than that. It involves a co-ordinated effort at social reconstruction; and for such changes the first essential is an intelligent and widespread understanding of the facts.

What I have to put to you is that we have been born into an age in which, thanks to the labours and activities of the spirit which you represent in human life, the governing conditions of the struggle of mankind with Nature for survival and the enlargement of life have been quite fundamentally changed: so changed as to make a new social structure, related to the new conditions of the struggle, imperative if we are ever to live comfortably again. Up till quite recent times, the governing factor in our human economy was that the measure and the limit of human production was the physical energy of human bodies. If you could go back in history even so short a period as two to three centuries, and watch the people of that day at their work, you would observe that the only tools they were using were such simple primitive tools as the spade and the axe, the saw and the hammer; of which the defining characteristic was that they were tools capable of being put and kept in operation by the power of a man's arm, or by the kindred power of the muscular energy of the few animals he had tamed to his service. Upon that fact—the fact of the muscular energy of living bodies operating as the physical energy of production and as the measure of output—every economic system in human history, through all the ages down, to our own, was based.

We have been born into an age in which there has been an explosive upheaval of all these limitations on human production. We speak of the period of this industrial revolution as the Machine Age. But I put it to you that that is not a true definition. The machine is only a secondary and a derivative thing. Man has always been a tool-using and a tool-inventing creature; up to the limit of his knowledge of power with which to put and keep the tool in operation. The revolutionary thing—the thing which has completely changed the conditions of our struggle with Nature for sustenance and put us into an entirely new relationship to production—is the substitution for human physical energy as the physical energy of production and as the measure of output, of new, gigantic, tireless, non-human physical energies. We have discovered that the natural resources of the world, from which all the satisfactions of human life have to be drawn, include not only the materials which have to be shaped into usable forms for us, but also the powers which can do the shaping with an effectiveness and upon a scale almost infinitely greater than has ever before been possible in human history. While men were dependent upon their own physical energies for shaping natural resources into usable commodities, the flow of output from their labours was pitifully meagre. Today, for every hour of human time devoted to the service of production—devoted to it in the form of supervision of the operation of our new powers—the flow of output for human satisfactions is anything up to a thousand times greater than has ever before resulted from any hour given to production in all the ages of mankind down to our own.

The world has been carried, almost at a stride, out of the immemorial ages of scarcity and penury into a new age of almost incredible plenty. We have passed into a new era in human history, wholly different from anything in previous human experience; a new age in which there is no longer any natural reason whatever why any human need should go unsupplied or any human life be without its ample satisfactions. What it means is nothing less than this: that there is no longer any real problem of poverty. So far as our powers of production are concerned, the problem of poverty is completely solved for mankind.

But if there is no longer any problem of poverty in regard to the real supplies and resources of the world, it is only too painfully obvious that there is an artificial problem of poverty due to the pitiful ineffectiveness of our human devices for getting those supplies and resources into use. Such poverty is not natural poverty at all: it is merely human stupidity and mismanagement. In the midst of all this real and discernible abundance, I have seen decent-looking men in your great cities raking over garbage dumps for crusts. I have seen the shanties on the Mississippi banks at St. Louis, where a population of resourceless people have built kennels for themselves out of river debris in which even a dog ought not to be housed. And what is even more significant than such dramatic spectacles, I have seen over wide districts of America the cultural services which it has been your pride to establish and foster, sinking into paralysis; seen the little one-roomed schools, with their little belfries, in the remoter rural areas closing down, and the great libraries in your cities unable to add a single new book to the cultural opportunities of their citizens for a couple of years past.

What, then, is it which is thus disabling us from passing our known and discernible abundance into the life stream of full usage and enjoyment by the peoples of the world? For what is happening with you is happening, in more or less degree, with most of the peoples of the world. This central disablement from getting into use and consumption the things we all want and can quite readily produce, is an identical trouble throughout the greater part of the world; and such a universal and identical trouble clearly cannot be of merely local or national origin, a mere accident of mismanagement in the political affairs of this or that country. Quite obviously, what it indicates is some basic want of adjustment between production and the facilities provided for usage and consumption; a maladjustment which is common to the social structure and the economic life of all the suffering peoples.

Will you forgive me if I am arrogant enough to believe that the answer to this riddle in the life of the world is really quite simple and plain if only men would seek for the answer in the scientific way? That is to say, if they would leave their passions and interests out of it, and look at the facts, as any technician would look at a mechanism which has got out of adjustment, with a view to discovering where the maladjustment is. The whole thing seems to me to be just such a technician's problem, and a careful scrutiny of the facts as to the economic consequences of power production gives us, I think, all the data necessary for making the readjustment.

What power production does is to give us goods and services by the measure of other powers than the time-energy measure of the human services rendered in production. We get from it an immensely increased flow of all the things we need with less and less usage of human time service for every unit of output. And our distributive economy still remains essentially unchanged and unadjusted to these new conditions, an economy which gives to the working mass of mankind no right whatever to use or consume even a sustenance ration of this plenty except by rendering the time-energy services which the producing system no longer requires and cannot utilize. As a direct result of this failure to bring our distributive procedure into accord with our new producing procedure, over a hundred millions of the world's people—breadwinners and their dependents—stand today, according to the latest estimate of the League of Nations, scrapped, unutilizable, superfluous to the producing requirements of the world, and therefore, within our anachronism of a distributive system, disabled as customers for our output, without any recognized or accredited right to share in the use and consumption of our abundance; so that we have to burn or plough in the goods for which this system distributes no purchasing power. Apart from the widespread human tragedy of it, is there any technician who instinctively does not revolt against such an attempt to run the car of civilization with all its engines, its producing powers, full out, and its brakes jammed hard on distribution so as to prevent any transmission of that power into a movement of human advance? Is it any wonder that, with such an internal friction of purposes, the whole machine should break down?

There is, I think, not the least hope in looking for remedies for this maladjustment by trying to devise schemes for ensuring work and steady employment for the displaced people. That is clean contrary to the discernible purpose of our new production powers. What they offer to us is not more employment, but more leisure: the release of the world's life from drudgery. And they do not merely *offer* leisure and abundance to us. They cannot work to any other end than the creation of leisure and abundance. By the very law of their nature, if we use them at all, they force leisure and abundance upon us. That is what they are for, and they can do no other.

Now, leisure and abundance are great and good gifts which a sane race of people should be able to take sanely and to use for the purposes of a general cultural life. But if we do not choose so to receive them, none the less we are compelled to receive them *in some fashion* so long as we use these power methods in production. And so we get the leisure forced upon us as resourceless unemployment, and the abundance as congested stocks—unless we cease producing and work below the capacity of our new powers—for which there is no available market. These great powers cannot be used for the narrow purposes of a class society without thus turning into curses and disasters the great and good gifts of which they might be the carriers to the life of all mankind.

And if you will look, with any penetrative scrutiny at all, at this distributive procedure which in this way persistently thwarts our hopes of the enlargement of human life, the secret of the maladjustment stands revealed clearly enough. Our earliest knowledge of man reveals him as a nomadic savage living in a sort of primitive communism. But as a more settled habit of life began to appear, that primitive communism faded out, and gave rise to a new sort of social structure altogether. And for a very plain and obvious reason. It was an age of scarcity; of meagre returns for the unremitting labour of men in their struggle with Nature for sustenance; and in the world's ages of scarcity, communism, while it would have meant equality, would only have meant an equality of drudgery and of hard and bare living.

But there are other things in human life than drudgery. There are desires and impulses in human nature that began to manifest themselves at a very early stage in human development: reachings out toward a higher cultural life. And in the ages of scarcity, no release of the general life of mankind from drudgery into a life of cultural opportunity was possible. It was imperative, if the physical basis of life was to be kept supplied, that the mass of men should be engaged in continuous labour. The escape from that doom of drudgery was only possible for the few, and only for them in one way: the way of securing control and command over the lives and labour of the mass of their fellow men.

The new structure of society for the purpose of such beginnings of human cultural life was therefore a class structure, in which, whether in the crude form of slavery or in the more refined form of property systems controlling the working community's opportunities to live, the door of escape into another life than participation in the common lot of drudgery was opened for the few. It was a social structure which arose under conditions of scarcity, was entirely related to such conditions, and served a real purpose in human cultural development as the then only available means of fostering it.

What power production has done is to give us slaves other than human to do our drudgery for us, and to enable us to make a general liberation of life into cultural opportunity. The old unhappy class breach in human life has become obsolete. Human life need no longer be divided against itself in that way. The attempt to perpetuate, in this new world of plenty, the old device of the age of scarcity, is no longer possible without bringing our civilization to catastrophy. The leisure and the abundance which are the inevitable consequences of power production cannot be distributed by the old scarcity age procedure of setting a class form for cultural development and putting the opportunities of the general community to live under their command and control. What the new powers are demanding from us, in all the confusion and demoralization of life that they inflict upon us so long as we do not comply with the demand, is a new distributive system adjusted to their requirements of leisure and abundance.

Dimly as yet, but with a steadily growing clarity, this purpose is shaping itself in the minds of men as the discernible purpose of civilization under the changed conditions of production. That the detailed planning for it is as yet crude and makeshift; that most of the conceptions of it are like the conceptions of things only half seen in the shadows of the hour before the full dawn; that in the actual event it will probably take shape other than our present crude perceptions of it; that many processes of trial and error, of experiment and failure, will mark its development: all that is probably true enough. But none the less it is to this new conception of human life and human relationships that the compelling consequences of power production are shaping—and in their essential character must shape—the life of the world. Is it too much to hope that the mind and the temperament for which you stand in human affairs, having given us the means to this end, having set loose the forces in which this end is implicit, may complete its task by helping us to understand how to use its gifts with the ordered and discerning intelligence which thus far has been so tragically lacking in the world's reception of them?

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